

Message Text

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17

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT AO

SUBJECT: REPORT OF TRIP NORTH OF LUANDA : MPLA BLOCKADE CONTINUES

1. ON JUNE 25 I TRAVELLED OVERLAND TO A POINT ABOUT EIGHTY KILOMETERS NORTH OF LUANDA. ONCE ONE LEAVES THE CITY HEADING NORTHWARD ONE FINDS THE MPLA IN COMPLETE CONTROL UNTIL CAXITO (53 KILOMETERS). THE ONLY EVIDENCE OF FNLA ARE GARRISONS POCKMARKED BY BULLETS AND ROCKETS. AT QUIFANGONDO BETWEEN KILOMETERS 15 AND 20 (ALSO CALLED QUINFANDONGO) I SAW THE DESERTED GARRISON FORMERLY OCCUPIED BY FNLA. THE BARRACKS HAD SUFFERED ONLY SLIGHT DAMAGE.

2. FURTHER ALONG THE ROAD IN QUIFANGONDO I ENTERED AN MPLA GARRISON SITUATED AT THE BASE OF A HIGH TENSION TOWER THAT CONTAINS THE TRANSFORMER WHICH SUPPLIES POWER TO THE LUANDA WATER SUPPLY PUMPING STATION. I LINED THE TROOPS UP FOR PICTURES. THEY WORE A MOTLEY ASSORTMENT OF UNIFORMS AND CARRIED A SIMILARLY ASSORTED COLLECTION OF WEAPONS: AK-47, G-3, UZI AND ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADE LAUNCHERS. AFTER DETERMINING THAT THE LARGEST BASES WERE ALONG A ROAD RUNNING FROM QUIFANGONDO TO CATETE I TOOK TWO SOLDIERS WITH ME TO USE AS TICKETS TO ONE OF THE BASES.

3. THE BASE I VISITED IS A FORMER RURAL TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOL
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AND EXPERIMENTAL FARM, WHERE SEVERAL HUNDRED RECRUITS ARE IN

TRAINING, MOST WITHOUT UNIFORMS; THOSE WHO WERE FITTED OUT WORE PORTUGUESE CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORMS. THE POLITICAL COMMISSARY

AND HIS ASSISTANT, A WHITE, INSISTED THAT THE MPLA HAS NOT CUT TRAFFIC BETWEEN LUANDA AND THE NORTH. THE NAKURU SUMMIT CALLS FOR FREE TRANSIT, THEY SAID, AND MPLA WOULD BE THE LAST TO GO AGAINST THE WILL OF THEIR LEADERSHIP. MPLA DOES NOT HAVE ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS; THIS IS BUT A FANTASY OF THE FNLA. AS I LEFT THE BASE THE TROOPS WERE LINING UP FOR CEREMONIES TO COMMEMORATE THE INDEPENDENCE OF MOZAMBIQUE AND ABOUT 200 RECRUITS WITHOUT UNIFORMS WERE ON THE PARADE GROUND. ABOUT FIFTY SOLDIERS IN PORTUGUESE CAMOUFLAGE FATIGUES WERE ALSO IN EVIDENCE, ALONG WITH LOUNGERS IN THE SHADE AND DOORWAYS.

4. AT CAXITO I FOUND AN MPLA ROADBLOCK ON THE ROAD TO AMBRIZ. THE ROAD WAS EMPTY AND I MOVED ALONG AT 100 MILES AN HOUR FOR PART OF THE WAY. ABOUT THIRTY FIVE KILOMETERS NORTH OF CAXITO WE CAME ACROSS AN FNLA GARRISON AT A PLACE CALLED ASFALTO. THE ROAD BETWEEN CAXITO AND ASFALTO WAS ABSOLUTELY DEVOID OF HOUSES OR PEOPLE AND I SAW NO PATROLS. THE COMMANDER AT ASFALTO, A WHITE DESERTER FROM THE PORTUGUESE ARMY, TOOK US ON ANOTHER FIVE KILOMETERS TO A PALM OIL AND BANANA PLANTATION CALLED FOZENDA LIBONGO, WHERE WE FOUND A GARRISON OF SOME THREE HUNDRED MEN. THE TROOPS WERE ARMED WITH BELGIAN FN RIFLES AND UZIS. THE FNLA'S CHIEF COMPLAINT IS THAT MPLA REFUSED TO ALLOW ANY VEHICLE TO COME NORTH FROM LUANDA WITH FOODSTUFFS OR SUPPLIES THAT MIGHT CONCEIVABLY BE OF USE TO THE FNLA. MPLA DOES ALLOW VEHICLES THROUGH, BUT ONLY IF THEY CONTAIN ITEMS THAT ARE NOT EDIBLE OR POSSIBLY USEFUL TO THE FNLA. THE TROOPS SURVIVE ON LOCAL PRODUCE AND A VERY UNSATISFACTORY SUPPLY SYSTEM FROM ZAIRE. THE OWNER OF THE PLANTATION WAS SUFFERING FROM A SHORTAGE OF LABOR; LIKE COFFEE GROWERS HE DEPENDED UPON CONTRACT LABORERS FROM THE SOUTH AND NOW THAT THEY ARE UNWILLING TO COME NORTH HE USES THE LOCAL LABOR AND THE QUALITY OF HIS PRODUCE HAS DECLINED DRAMATICALLY.

5. IN BOTH MPLA AND FNLA BASES I NOTICED A LACK OF VEHICLES. WHEN I HEADED SOUTH FROM ASFALTO THE COMMANDER ASKED ME TO TAKE TWO SOLDIERS A FEW MILES SOUTH TO PATROL. IF
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I HAD NOT BEEN GOING IN THAT DIRECTION HE WOULD NOT HAVE THOUGHT OF TAKING SUCH AN INITIATIVE. I DID NOT SEE THE FAMED ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. BUT THE FNLA TROOPS SAID THEY WERE DOING ALL RIGHT DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING IN QUIFANGONDO UNTIL THE PORTUGUESE ARMY SENT IN EIGHT ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS DRIVEN BY PORTUGUESE TROOPS. THE DAY AFTER MY TRIP I TALKED WITH A LOCAL BUSINESSMAN WHO TOLD ME THE VEHICLES WERE IN FACT PILOTED BY WHITE MPLA TROOPS, WHICH GAVE

RISE TO THE FNLA CLAIM OF PORTUGUESE ARMY INTERVENTION.
KILLORAN

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